

Message Text

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ACTION COME-00

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 EA-11 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1204

INFO AMEMBASSY BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBSSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMCONSUL MADRAS

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PASS COMMERCE ASSISTANT SECRETARY BLACKWELL

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, BG, IN

SUBJECT: WATERMAN LASH MISSION

1. REPRESENTATIVES OF WATERMAN STEAMSHIP COMPANY ACCOMPANIED BY RICHARD GAGE OF MARITIME ADMINISTRATION HAVE DISCUSSED MARCH 1974 COMMENCEMENT OF LASH SERVICE WITH GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE OFFICIALS IN SEVERAL INDIAN AND BANGLADESH PORTS.

2. CUSTOMS OFFICIALS IN BOMBAY, SPEAKING IN GENERAL FOR OTHER INDIAN PORTS AS WELL, WILL ACCEPT DOCUMENTATION PROPOSED BY WATERMAN. THEY WILL ALSO ACCEPT LASH BARGES FOR MOVEMENT WITHIN INDIA FOR UP TO SIX MONTHS PER BARGE. THEY MAY REQUIRE BOND THAT BARGES LEAVE WITHIN SIX MONTHS AND IF SO THE BOND COULD BE SET AT ONEROUS LEVEL. THIS ISSUE IS EXPECTED TO BE DISCUSSED FURTHER IN NEW DELHI. OPERATIONAL MATTERS SATISFACTORY IN BOMBAY.

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3. COCHIN HARBOR NOT SUITABLE FOR TURNAROUND OF LASH VESSEL AND PLANS FOR ADEQUATE DREDGING ARE NOT TO BE COMPLETED UNTIL 1978. IF COCHIN IS TO BE CALLED BARGES WILL HAVE TO BE DISCHARGED FOUR MILES AT SEA. THIS OPERATON PROBABLY NOT FEASIBLE DURING MAY TO SEPTEMBER MONSOON SEASON.

4. TUGS ARE PROBLEMS AT CALCUTTA. EXCELLENT ANCHORAGE AND STAGING AREA VISITED AT HOLDIA, ABOUT 40 MILES DOWN HOOGHLY FROM CALCUTTA. PORT TRUST OFFICIALS VERY COOPERATIVE AND ARE HELPING WATERMAN SEEK SATISFACTORY TUGS TO WORK LASH VESSEL AND TRANSPORT BARGES BETWEEN HOLDIA AND CALCUTTA. CURRENT IN HOOGHLY RIVER EBBS AND FLOODS AT FIVE TO EIGHT KNOTS WITH CONDITIONS MORE DIFFICULT DURING MONSOON. BUT CALCUTTA OPERATION SHOULD BE GOOD IF ADEQUATE TUGS SECURED.

5. CHITTAGONG IS PRINCIPAL PORT OF BANGLADESH. PORT TRUST OFFICIALS ARE COOPERATIVE AND WANT THE LASH SERVICE. THIS PORT DIRECTLY ON RIVER WITH CURRENT SIMILAR TO HOOGHLY BUT IT IS EXPECTED THAT SIMILAR BARGE STAGING AREA IN LEE AREA WILL BE AVAILABLE. PORT TURST IS WILLING TO MAKE ITS TUGS AVAILABLE AND IT WILL HAVE TWO GOOD ONES, BUT NOT SCHEDULED FOR DELIVERY UNTIL AUGUST 1974. WATERMAN SEEKING TUGS ON INTERIM BASIS.

6. CHALNA IS SMALL, PRIMITIVE PORT BUT CAN ACCOUNT FOR SIGNIFICANT JUTE EXPORTS. TENTATIVE PLAN IS TO TOW BARGES FROM HOLDIA ANCHORAGE THROUGH ISLAND RIVER SYSTEM. BANGLADESH CUSTOMS OFFICIALS SEE NO PROBLEMS BECAUSE HOLDIA IS IN INDIA.

7. MISSION SO FAR HAS OBSERVED NO OPPOSITION TO LASH AND IN MOST CASES AFFIRMATIVE SUPPORT. BUREAURACY IN BOTH COUNTRIES IS SLOW MOVING. SO FAR ALL WATERMAN PLANS PROVIDE FOR BRINGING BARGES ONLY TO ESTABLISHED PORTS AND THEREFORE NOT COMPETING WITH EXISTING BARGE OPERATIONS. PROBLEMS LIKELY IN FUTURE YEARS IF WATERMAN SEEKS TO MOVE BARGES DIRECTLY TO JUTE PLANTS AND OTHER SHIPPING POINTS. THIS PRACTICE IS ONE OF THE BIG ADVANTAGES OF LASH.
NEWBERRY

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